NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
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WAYNE COREY/KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA: HUSSEIN ONN MANDATE

ANNCR:

THE MALAYSIAN ELECTIONS, IN WHICH THE RULING FRONT WON A LANDSLIDE VICTORY HAVE GIVEN PRIME MINISTER DATUK HUSSEIN ONN AN UNQUALIFIED MANDATE TO CONTINUE TO LEAD THE NATION. VOA CORRESPONDENT WAYNE COREY HAS DETAILS IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM KUALA LUMPUR.

VOICE:

THE MULTI-RACIAL RULING FRONT HAD BEEN GUARDED IN ITS PRE-ELECTION FORECAST. IT SAW THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF ITS CONTROL OF SEVERAL STATES AS WELL AS THE POSSIBLY REDUCED MAJORITY IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT. BUT AFTER THE VOTES IN SATURDAY'S ELECTIONS WERE COUNTED, THE FRONT'S CAUTIOUS ASSESSMENT, INDEED, ITS FEARS, PROVED UNJUSTIFIED. THE FRONT HAS NINETY-EIGHT OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR PARLIAMENTARY SEATS. AND, AFTER THE EAST MALAYSIAN STATES OF SABAH AND SARAWAK HOLD FULL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS LATER THIS MONTH, THE FRONT IS CERTAIN TO HAVE ANOTHER ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.

THE REAL WINNER IN SATURDAY'S ELECTIONS IN MALAYSIA IS PRIME MINISTER DATUK HUSSEIN ONN, WHO WANTED HIS OWN MANDATE TO LEAD THE COUNTRY FOR FIVE FULL YEARS. HE TOOK OFFICE TWO YEARS AGO AFTER THE DEATH OF THE LATE PRIME MINISTER TUN ABDUL RAZAK. SINCE THEN, MALAYSIA HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH GENUINE PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY, AND PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN HAS EARNED THE RESPECT OF MOST OF THE COUNTRY'S ETHNIC MALAYS, CHINESE AND INDIANS. OF COURSE, HE HAS HIS CRITICS. THEY ARE PRIMARILY ETHNIC INDIANS AND CHINESE WHO BELIEVE HIS GOVERNMENT UNDULY FAVORS THE BUMIPUTROS, THE POOR MALAY WORKERS.

THOSE WHO KNOW HIM WELL DESCRIBE PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN AS A FAIR AND REASONABLE MAN. HE IS RARELY INTERVIEWED BY THE FOREIGN PRESS, PERHAPS BECAUSE HE FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE IN ENCOUNTERS OF THIS KIND. HE DOES NOT ENJOY ROUGH AND TUMBLE POLITICS. YET, MANY MALAYSIANS SAY HE HAS SURVIVED SOME BITTER INTERNAL POLITICAL BATTLES AND THAT HE WILL NOT COMPROMISE ON ISSUES INVOLVING BASIC PRINCIPLES.

WHAT PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN'S GOVERNMENT HAS ACHIEVED INTERNALLY IS A FACTOR IN WHAT IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THROUGH CAREFUL, PERSISTENT AND SUBTLE DIPLOMACY, MALAYSIA HAS EMERGED AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE NON-COMMUNIST ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) AND THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDOCHINA. EVEN AN INTENSELY SUSPICIOUS VIETNAM NOW APPEARS READY TO TALK WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING MALAYSIA, ABOUT SOMETHING DEAR TO MALAYSIA'S HEART -- THE CREATION OF A ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

SATURDAY'S ELECTIONS IN MALAYSIA INSURED CONTINUITY IN THAT COUNTRY'S INTERNAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. AND IN AN AGE OF SOMETIMES IRRELEVANT AND OFTEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE FLAMBOYANCE, THE MALAYSIAN ELECTIONS ALSO REVEALED A DEFINITE PREFERENCE FOR UNDERSTATED SOLIDITY.

JS/RCS